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Victimization of older Canadians, 2009

by Shannon Brennan

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Victimization of older Canadians, 2009

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Symbols

. not available for any reference period
.. not available for a specific reference period
... not applicable
0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
^{p} preliminary
^{r} revised
x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
^{E} use with caution
F too unreliable to be published

Victimization of older Canadians, 2009: Highlights

- In 2009, more than 154,000 Canadians aged 55 or older living in the 10 provinces reported being the victim of violence in the previous 12 months. Overall, their rate of self-reported violent victimization was significantly lower than the rates reported by younger age groups.

- Fewer than 1% of Canadians 55 years or older reported being the victim of spousal violence in the 12 months preceding the survey, a figure that has remained stable since 2004.

- Just over 333,000 or 8% of Canadian households composed solely of residents aged 55 and over reported being the victim of a household crime in the previous 12 months. Overall, the rate of household victimization among older households was close to two and a half times lower than the rate reported by younger households.

- Theft of household property (31%) was the most common form of non-violent crime reported by older households, followed by break and enter (29%), vandalism (28%) and theft of motor vehicle (13%). Theft of household property was also the most common type of offence reported by younger households.

- Relatively few violent incidents against older Canadians resulted in injury to the victim (19%[E]), and just over one-third involved the use of a weapon (35%[E]). Comparable findings were seen among younger Canadians.

- Less than one-half (46%) of all violent incidents involving older Canadians were brought to the attention of the police; however, they were more likely to be reported to police than were violent incidents involving younger Canadians (28%).

- Violent incidents involving older Canadians were more likely to result in emotional consequences compared with incidents involving younger Canadians (91% and 79%). Feelings of anger, confusion and fear were the most common reactions reported by both groups.

- The majority (91%) of older Canadians felt satisfied with their personal safety from crime. However, feelings of satisfaction varied based on experiences of victimization, with non-victims reporting higher levels of satisfaction (91%) compared with those who had been violently victimized (83%).

- Older Canadians were less likely than younger Canadians to report having used a crime prevention method, such as changing their routine or avoiding certain places, in the 12 months preceding the survey (29% versus 43%). However, older victims were more likely than older non-victims to have used a crime prevention method (64% versus 29%).

Note

[E] use with caution

Victimization of older Canadians, 2009

by Shannon Brennan

Canadians aged 55 and older constitute one of the fastest growing populations in the country. In the coming decades, it is projected that Canada's population will continue to age considerably, with the proportion of Canadians aged 55 and older rising from 27% in 2011 to 35% in 2031 (Statistics Canada 2010a). This is due to a variety of factors, including aging baby boomers, decreasing fertility rates and an increase in life expectancy (Schellenberg and Turcotte 2007).

This shift in Canada's age structure has numerous implications for Canadian society, including impacts on the economy, the healthcare system, and social services (Certified General Accountants Association of Canada 2005). The aging population is also expected to impact Canada's justice system in a variety of sectors, including policing, corrections and victim services (Payne 2005; CSC 2010).

Historically, older Canadians have reported some of the lowest victimization rates (Ogrodnik 2007); however, some studies have suggested that victimization against seniors will increase as the population expands (Sev'er 2009). Conversely, other research suggests that rates of victimization will decrease, as younger groups most at risk for victimization age (Boe 2010; Carrington 2001). In recent years, the Canadian government has developed initiatives aimed at meeting the needs of older victims and helping to inform policy decisions related to victimization and abuse (National Seniors Council 2007).

Using data from the 2009 General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization, this *Juristat* article examines trends in the victimization of older Canadians, namely those aged 55 and older living in the 10 provinces.[1,2] In addition to examining the nature and prevalence of both violent victimization and household victimization against older Canadians, this *Juristat* article explores older Canadians' experiences of emotional and financial abuse and their experiences of Internet victimization. Finally, this study examines reporting of victimization incidents to police, the emotional and financial consequences of victimization, as well as older Canadians' perceptions of personal safety, their sense of community belonging, and their use of crime prevention methods among both victims and non-victims.

Text box 1
How this study measures self-reported victimization against older Canadians

While many studies have focused on seniors aged 65 and older, this study encompasses a wider age range, and includes those aged 55 to 64 in the definition of "older". This was done primarily to avoid exclusion of certain segments of the population. For example, studies have shown that Aboriginal people and those with physical or mental disabilities tend to, on average, have shorter life expectancies and poorer health compared with the general population (Statistics Canada 2010b). As such, restricting the analysis to those 65 and older may have resulted in the exclusion of the experiences of victimization and abuse of these groups (Spencer and Gutman 2008).

This study uses data from the 2009 General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization to examine both self-reported violent and household victimization of older Canadians. Where applicable, data from previous GSS cycles on victimization (1999 and 2004) are included to provide comparisons and identify trends in self-reported victimization of older Canadians.

Overall, the GSS measures three types of self-reported violent victimization (sexual assault, robbery and physical assault).[3] The GSS also measures four types of self-reported household victimization (break and enter, motor vehicle theft, household theft and vandalism). These incidents are referred to as "household victimization" as the target of the incident is the household, rather than an individual person. In this *Juristat* article, "older households" refers to households where the youngest member is at least 55 years of age.

One limitation of this study is that the results of the GSS may exclude some older Canadians, namely those who may not have access to a telephone, those living in an institution such as a long-term care facility, and those living in the territories.

1. The production of this analytical report was supported by funding from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.
2. Information on victimization in the territories was collected using a different methodology and is therefore not included in this article.
3. For both sexual and physical assault, the GSS captures detailed information on incidents committed by current and former spouses. For more information on spousal violence and how it is measured, see text box 2.

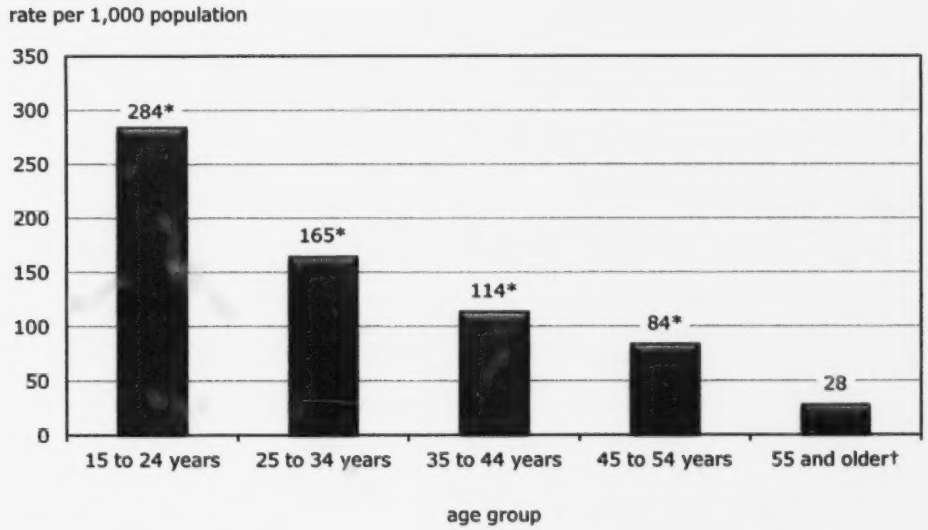
Self-reported violent victimization of older Canadians

Older Canadians report lowest rates of violent victimization

In 2009, more than 154,000 or 2% of all Canadians aged 55 and older living in the 10 provinces reported having been the victim of a violent crime. Overall, older Canadians reported experiencing close to 241,000 incidents of violence in 2009, with their rate of violent victimization remaining essentially unchanged from 2004 (Table 1).

Similar to previous years, the rate of self-reported violent victimization among older Canadians was significantly lower compared with every other age group. For example, the rate of violent victimization among those aged 55 and older was more than 10 times lower than the rate of violent victimization self-reported by the youngest age group, Canadians aged 15 to 24 (Chart 1).

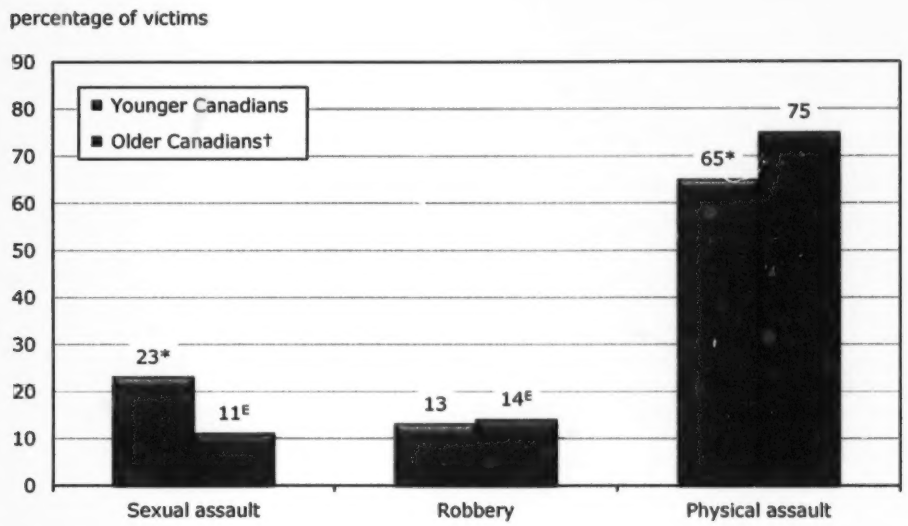
Chart 1
Self-reported rate of violent victimization by age group, 2009



† reference category
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
Note: Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

The forms of violence experienced by older Canadians were similar to those experienced by Canadians aged 54 and younger, with both groups citing physical assault as the most common form of violence experienced. However, older Canadians were less likely than younger Canadians to self-report sexual assault (Chart 2).

Chart 2
Type of self-reported violent victimization of younger and older Canadians, 2009



† reference category
E use with caution
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
Note: Younger Canadians refers to individuals ages 15 to 54. Older Canadians refers to individuals aged 55 years or over. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

Overall, older Canadians were just as likely as younger Canadians to report being victimized multiple times. For example, of the older Canadians who had been victimized in the 12 months preceding the survey, about one-quarter (24%) reported being victimized two or more times, a proportion similar to their younger counterparts (26%).

Text box 2
Self-reported physical and sexual violence, and emotional and financial abuse in spousal relationships

In 2009, the GSS asked all Canadians who were married or living in a common-law relationship, or who had contact with their ex-partner within the previous five years, a series of 10 questions about spousal violence. These questions measured both physical and sexual violence as defined by the *Criminal Code* and included acts such as being threatened with violence, being pushed, grabbed, shoved, slapped, kicked, bit, hit, beaten, choked, threatened with a gun or knife or forced into sexual activity.

Of the approximately 154,000 older Canadians who were violently victimized in 2009, close to 39,000[E] were physically or sexually assaulted by a current or ex-spouse (legal or common-law). Overall, this represented less than 1% of all Canadians aged 55 and over with a spouse, a figure that has remained stable since 2004.

Overall, older Canadians were slightly less likely than those aged 15 to 54 to report having been the victim of spousal violence in the 12 months preceding the survey (1%[E] versus 2% respectively).

In addition to collecting information on the nature and prevalence of spousal violence, the GSS asked Canadians about emotional or financial abuse that they may have experienced at the hands of a current or ex-spouse (legal or common-law).

Older Canadians were also less likely than younger Canadians to self-report having suffered emotional abuse by a spouse. For example, while close to 1 in 5 (19%) Canadians aged 15 to 54 experienced emotional abuse by a current or ex-spouse (legal or common-law), the same was true for just over 1 in 10 (13%) older Canadians. In the same vein, older Canadians were also less likely than younger Canadians to report having been financially abused by a spouse, in that they were prevented from having knowledge about or access to the family income (2% versus 3%).

The most common form of emotional abuse reported by older Canadians with a current or ex-spouse (legal or common-law) was being put down or called names by their partner to make them feel bad (59%). Other forms of emotional abuse experienced by older Canadians included: having their partner demand to know where they were at all times (43%), having their partner not wanting them to talk to others (37%), and trying to limit their contact with family and friends (32%). These were also the most common forms of emotional abuse experienced by younger Canadians.

Rates of self-reported violent victimization among older Canadians related to age and marital status

As previously mentioned, the results of the 2009 GSS show that rates of self-reported violent victimization among older Canadians are significantly lower compared with every other age group. However, this was particularly true for those aged 65 and older. Overall, the rate of self-reported violent victimization for those aged 65 and older was about half the rate reported by those 55 to 64 years old (Table 2).

In addition to age, marital status was also found to be related to rates of self-reported violent victimization. More specifically, the rate of violent victimization among older Canadians who were separated or divorced was almost double the rate of those who were married or living common-law. These findings were similar among Canadians aged 54 and younger.

While rates of violent victimization varied by age and marital status, other socio-demographic characteristics were not found to impact rates of violent victimization for those aged 55 and older. For example, similar to younger Canadians, rates of violent victimization among older Canadians did not differ based on sex.

Violent victimization of older Canadians most often committed in private residences

The results of the 2009 GSS demonstrate that in many ways, the nature of violent incidents experienced by older Canadians closely resembles that of younger Canadians.[4] For example, most violent offences against older Canadians were committed by just one offender (69%), the majority of whom were male (86%). Further, over one-half (54%) of the violent incidents self-reported by older Canadians were committed by a stranger. These proportions were not significantly different from those reported by younger Canadians (Table 3).

The severity of the violence was also comparable among different age groups. Overall, older Canadians were no more likely than younger Canadians to report the presence of a weapon during the incident (35%[E] versus 27%), and were no more likely to report being injured as a result of the violence (19%[E] versus 18%).

The only difference among the age groups was the location where the violent incident occurred. Violent incidents involving older Canadians were more likely to have occurred in a private residence (50%), while those involving younger Canadians were more likely to have taken place in a commercial establishment, such as a shopping mall or a restaurant (40%). This may be partly related to the amount of time each group spends performing activities outside the home. The 2009 GSS showed that younger Canadians were more likely than older Canadians to say that they frequently participated in evening activities—engaging in upwards of 20 or more outings per month (61% versus 28%).

Text box 3
Police-reported violence against older Canadians

At Statistics Canada, there are three nationally-representative surveys that measure the extent and nature of violence in Canada: self-reported victimization data from the General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization and police-reported data from the Homicide Survey and the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey. Unlike the GSS, which collects information on three violent offences, the UCR2 survey captures information on all violent crimes listed in the *Criminal Code*, grouped into over 50 offence categories. All three surveys collect information pertaining to violence against older Canadians.

Police-reported data from 2010 show that Canadians aged 55 and older experience the lowest rates of violent crime. In 2010, the rate of violence against older Canadians was 316 violent incidents per 100,000 population. This was almost three times lower than the rate reported for those 45 to 54 years (931 per 100,000 population), and more than eight times lower than the rate recorded for those between 18 and 24 years (2,631 per 100,000 population).

Overall, common assault, the least serious form of assault in which little to no physical harm is caused to the victim, was the most prevalent offence committed against older Canadians (129 per 100,000 population). Other relatively common offences included uttering threats (61 per 100,000 population), major assault (35 per 100,000 population), and robbery (25 per 100,000 population). These were also among the most common forms of violence experienced by younger Canadians; however, for all three types of crime, the rates for older Canadians were substantially lower.

Data collected by the Homicide Survey also play an important role in measuring violence in Canada. While homicide in Canada is a fairly rare occurrence, it is generally recognized as a country's barometer of violence as it is one crime that almost invariably comes to the attention of the police (Marshall and Block 2004).

Data from the Homicide Survey support trends from the GSS and the UCR, showing that older Canadians experience the lowest rates of violence. Between 2000 and 2010, there were 883 homicides committed against older adults, representing 14% of all homicides in Canada. During this time, the rate of homicide among those aged 55 and older was 1.0 per 100,000 population, lower than the rate reported by those 45 to 54 (1.6 per 100,000 population), and four times lower than the rate recorded for those between 18 and 24 (4.0 per 100,000 population).

Homicide rates for older adults have also been gradually declining since 2000. Overall, the rate of homicide among older Canadians decreased by 22% between 2000 and 2010. These trends coincide with trends in homicide in general (Hotton Mahony, 2011).

4. This section excludes incidents of spousal violence.

Older women more likely than older men to be emotionally or financially abused by a child, relative, friend or caregiver

In 2009, the GSS asked Canadians 65 years and older about their experiences of emotional and financial abuse where the abuser was their child, a relative, friend or caregiver. While emotional and financial abuse are not used in the calculation of overall victimization rates, this information provides useful insight into the health and safety of older Canadians.

Overall, close to 107,000 or 2% of Canadians aged 65 or older said that a child, relative, friend or caregiver had been emotionally or financially abusive in the 5 years preceding the survey. In general, emotional abuse was more prevalent than financial abuse. More specifically, 2% of those aged 65 and older said that someone had attempted to limit their contact with family or friends, called them names to make them feel bad, or threatened to harm them or someone close to them. Less than 1% said that they were prevented from knowing about or having access to their income, or forced them to relinquish control over their finances or give up something of value.

Women aged 65 and over were slightly more likely than men to report having been emotionally or financially abused, however the difference between the two groups was small (3% versus 2%[E]). In addition, experiences of emotional or financial abuse also varied based on health and mobility. For example, people who had some form of activity limitation were more likely than those who had no limitation to report having been abused by a child, relative, friend or caregiver in the 5 years preceding the survey (3% versus 1%[E]).

Although experiences of emotional or financial abuse varied among those with activity limitations, the findings from the 2009 GSS show that the risk of being abused did not increase with age. Overall, those aged 65 to 69 were just as likely as those 80 years and older to reported having been emotionally or financially abused (3%[E] versus 2%[E]).

Self-reported household victimization of older households

Rate of household victimization remains stable

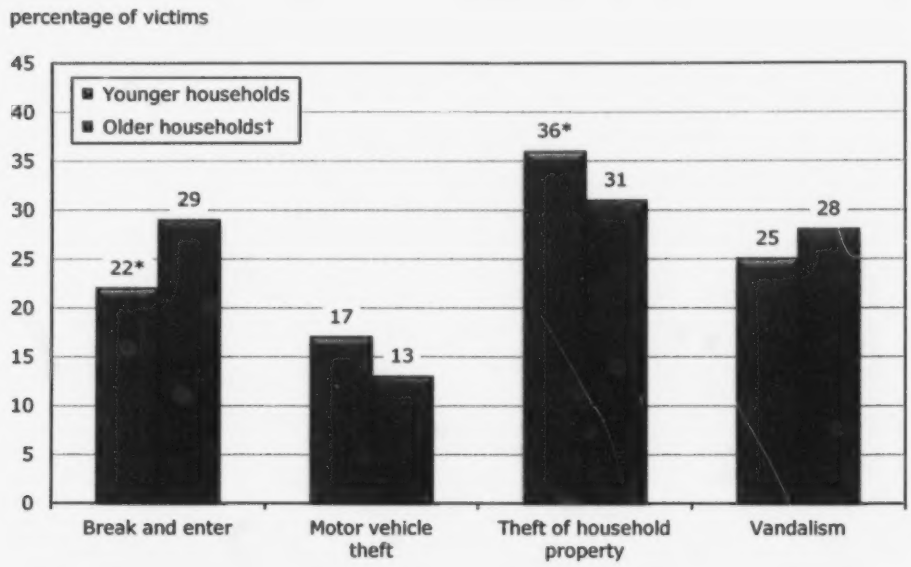
In 2009, just over 333,000 or 8% of Canadian households composed solely of residents aged 55 and older reported experiencing close to 462,000 incidents of household victimization (break and enter, theft of motor vehicle, household theft, vandalism) in the 12 months preceding the survey (Table 1). The overall rate of household victimization among these older households has remained stable since 2004, though it has increased 39% from 1999.

Despite an increase in rates between 1999 and 2009, the rate of household victimization among older households remained significantly lower compared with younger households.[5] Overall, the rate of household victimization among older households was close to two and a half times lower than the rate reported by younger households (114 versus 291 per 1,000 households).

Of the non-violent crimes reported by older households, theft of household property (31%), break and enter (29%) and vandalism (28%) were the most common, followed by theft of motor vehicles (13%). These were also the most common incidents cited by younger households; however, a larger proportion of older households reported experiencing break and enters compared with their younger counterparts (Chart 3).

5. An "older household" refers to a household where the youngest member is at least 55 years of age. For purposes of comparison, a "younger household" refers to a household where at least one member is aged 54 or younger.

Chart 3
Type of self-reported household victimization of younger and older households, 2009



† reference category
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
Note: Older households refers to households where the youngest member is at least 55 years of age. Younger households refers to households that comprise at least one member under the age of 55. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

Although rates of victimization were lower among older households, they were just as likely as other households to experience multiple incidents of victimization. For example, of the older households who were victimized, close to 1 in 5 (19%) stated that they had experienced two or more incidents of victimization in the 12 months preceding the survey, a proportion similar to younger households (22%).

Rates of victimization among older households related to location and ownership of residence

The results of the 2009 GSS indicate that there are particular characteristics that affect rates of victimization among older households which do not have a similar effect on younger households. Among these are the location and ownership of the residence, and total household income (Table 4).

In 2009, older households whose residence was located in a census metropolitan area[6] were more likely than those in smaller areas to report having experienced some form of household victimization. In the same vein, those who owned their home also reported higher rates of household victimization than those who rented their residence. Finally, older households who had an annual income of $100,000 or more had rates of victimization that were almost double those with an income of less than $20,000.

Other socio-demographic characteristics measured by the 2009 GSS not found to be associated with household victimization among older households were: household size, type of home, and length of time spent living at the residence.

6. A census metropolitan area (CMA) consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a major urban core. A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the urban core. To be included in the CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area, as measured by commuting flows derived from census data.

Text box 4
Mass marketing fraud and Internet victimization of older Canadians

The Canadian Anti-fraud Centre was established in 1993 to educate and inform Canadians about mass marketing fraud and to collect information on the prevalence of these incidents, which include telemarketing fraud, Internet fraud and identity theft.

In 2010, the Canadian Anti-fraud Centre received close to 50,000 complaints of mass marketing fraud, the majority of which were initiated by telephone. Older Canadians were seen to be at increased risk for experiencing mass marketing fraud for a number of different reasons, some of which include: having substantial savings or assets, having a greater sense of trust, and having limited contact with friends or family (Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre 2010).

Although telephone scams were the most prevalent form of fraud reported to the Centre, the advent of new technologies has created new means through which fraudulent acts can be committed, namely through e-mail, the Internet or text messaging. As such, governments and institutions have identified the need to examine the prevalence and address the growing risk of victimization on the Internet (Kowalski 2002).

In 2009, the General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization asked Canadians about their use of the Internet and problems or security issues they may have encountered when online.[7] Overall, close to two-thirds of older Canadians (64%) said that they experienced some form of security problem when using the Internet; however, they were less likely than their younger counterparts (64% versus 77%) to report an issue. The most common security problems encountered by older Canadians while using the Internet included receiving viruses, spyware or adware (53%), phishing attempts (38%), and having someone hack into their e-mail account or computer files (6%). These were also the most common problems reported by younger Canadians.

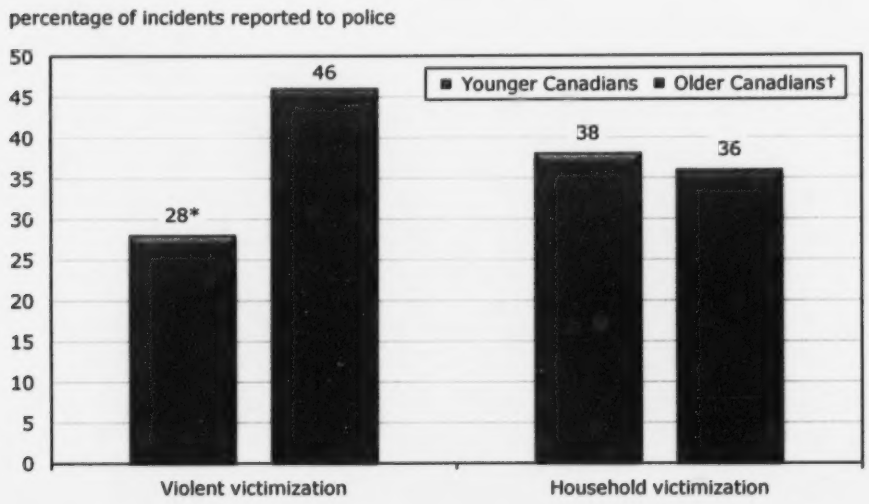
Reporting victimizations to the police

Previous research has shown that regardless of the type of crime, not all victimizations are reported to the police (Perreault and Brennan 2010). This was also true among incidents involving older Canadians. For example, overall, 46% of all violent incidents involving older Canadians were brought to the attention of police, while 36% of victimizations involving older households were reported to police.

Other studies have shown that the age of the victim can impact whether an incident is reported to police (Gannon and Mihorean 2005). The results of the 2009 GSS lend support to this research. Overall, incidents of violence where the victim was 55 years or older were almost twice as likely to be reported to police as were violent incidents where the victim was under the age of 55 (46% versus 28%) (Chart 4). The disparity in reporting is driven in part by those aged 15 to 24, whose rates of reporting to police were among the lowest (19%). There was no difference between younger and older households in reporting rates of household crimes.

7. For more information on Internet Victimization see Perreault, S. "Self-reported Internet victimization in Canada, 2009".

Chart 4
Self-reported victimizations reported to police, by younger and older Canadians and type of offence, 2009

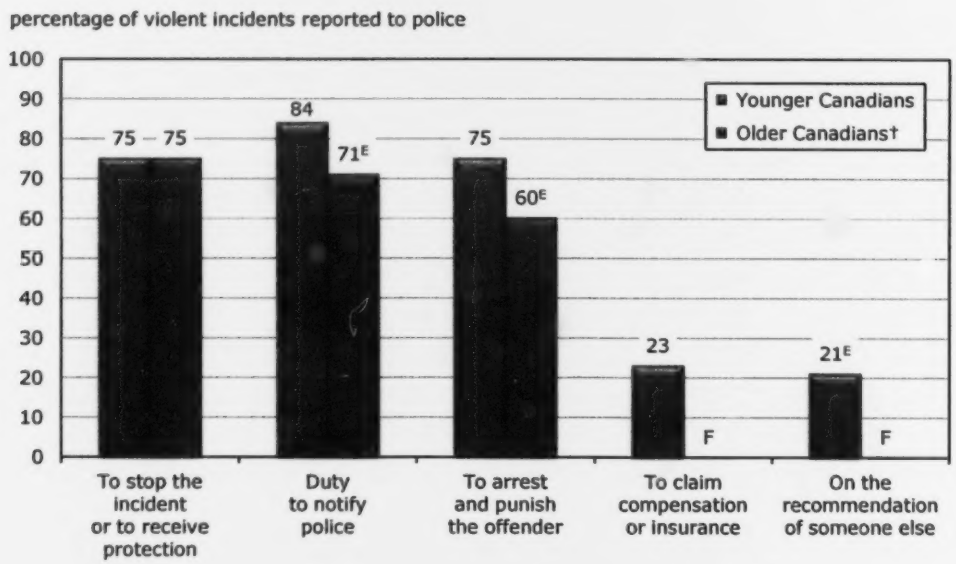


† reference category
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
Note: Younger Canadians refers to individuals ages 15 to 54. Older Canadians refers to individuals aged 55 years or over. Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

"Receiving protection" most common reason cited for reporting victimization to police

In 2009, older Canadians cited a variety of reasons as to why they chose to report their violent victimization to the police. Wanting to stop the incident and receive protection (75%) was the most commonly cited reason, followed by feeling a sense of duty to notify police (71%[E]), and a desire to arrest and punish the offender (60%[E]). These were also among the most frequently cited reasons reported by younger victims of violence (Chart 5) and victims of household crimes.

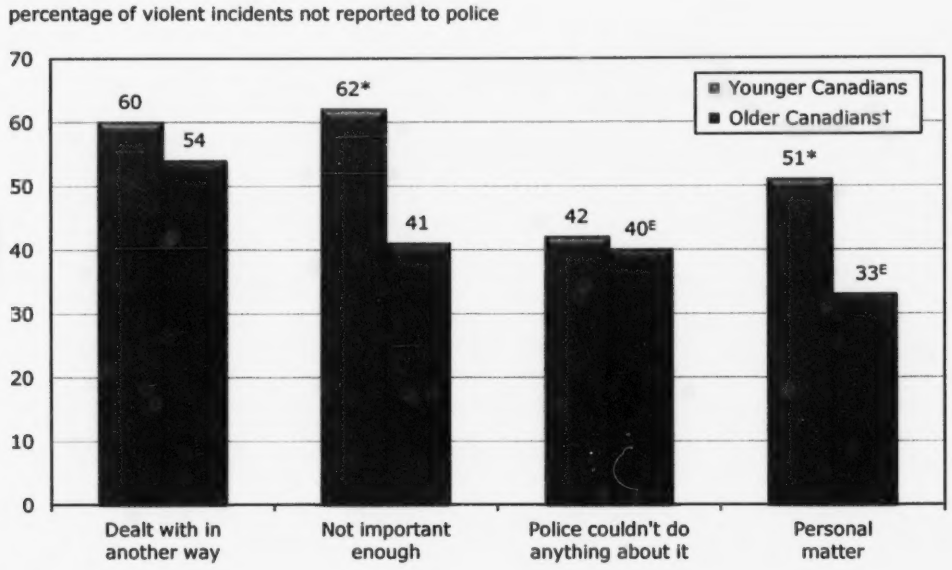
Chart 5
Reasons for reporting violent victimizations to the police among younger and older Canadians, 2009



† reference category
E use with caution
F too unreliable to be published
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
Note: Younger Canadians refers to individuals ages 15 to 54. Older Canadians refers to individuals aged 55 years or over. Totals will not add to 100% due to multiple responses. Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

Older and younger Canadians also reported similar reasons for not reporting violent incidents to the police, though with some exceptions. The most commonly cited reasons among both groups for not reporting violence included having dealt with the incident in another way, feeling that the police couldn't do anything about it, feeling that the incident wasn't important enough or that it was a personal matter. However, older Canadians were less likely than their younger counterparts to say that it was not important enough or was a personal matter (Chart 6). Victims of household crimes listed similar reasons to victims of violent crimes for not reporting to police.

Chart 6
Reasons for not reporting violent victimizations to the police among younger and older Canadians, 2009



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Note: Younger Canadians refers to individuals ages 15 to 54. Older Canadians refers to individuals aged 55 years or over. Totals will not add to 100% due to multiple responses. Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

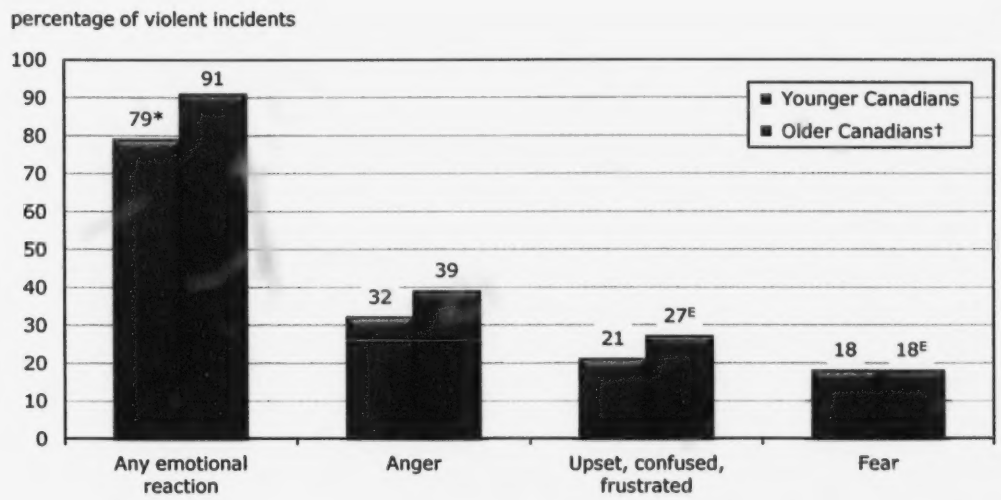
Impacts of victimization

Older victims of violence more likely than younger victims to experience emotional consequences

The impacts of crime are varied, and can involve a range of emotional and financial consequences for those involved. Previous results from the GSS have shown that consequences of criminal incidents are common among victims of both violent and household crimes (Perreault and Brennan 2010). This was found to be particularly true among incidents involving older victims.

While the nature of violent incidents experienced by older Canadians was similar to those experienced by younger Canadians, those 55 and older more often reported being emotionally affected. For example, in about 9 in 10 (91%) violent incidents involving older Canadians, the victim said that they were affected emotionally, compared with just under 8 in 10 (79%) incidents involving a victim aged 54 or younger. Anger (39%), confusion (27%[E]) and fear (18%[E]) were the most common emotional reactions experienced by older victims of violence. These reactions were also the most common among younger victims of violence (Chart 7).

Chart 7
Emotional consequences of self-reported violent victimization among younger and older Canadians, 2009



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Note: Younger Canadians refers to individuals ages 15 to 54. Older Canadians refers to individuals aged 55 years or over. Totals will not add to 100% due to multiple responses. Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

In general, emotional reactions to violent victimization have been shown to be more prevalent among female victims compared with male victims (AuCoin and Beauchamp 2007). However, this does not appear to be the case among older victims of violence. In 2009, violent incidents involving older men were just as likely as those involving older women to result in an emotional consequence for the victim (89% versus 92%).

Although household crime primarily targets property rather than people, victims of these crimes also reported experiencing emotional consequences. Unlike violent crimes, household crimes involving older victims were no more likely than those involving younger victims to result in the victim being affected emotionally (84% versus 82%). In addition to emotional consequences, many victims of household crimes stated that they experienced financial losses as a result of the incident. For example, over 3 in 4 (77%) incidents involving older households resulted in some financial loss, with 15% resulting in losses over $1,000. Older households were no more likely than younger households to have experienced a financial loss (77% versus 81%).

Perceptions of personal safety and community cohesion

Majority of older Canadians satisfied with their personal safety from crime

Previous studies have shown that, in general, Canadians are satisfied with their personal safety from crime (Brennan 2011, Perreault and Brennan 2010). The same was true for older Canadians, with the majority (91%) stating that that they were very or somewhat satisfied with their personal safety from crime. While this level was just slightly below those reported by younger Canadians (93%), there were no differences between younger and older Canadians when asked about feelings of safety when performing specific activities, such as walking alone or being home alone at night (Table 5).

Although the majority of older Canadians were satisfied with their personal safety from crime, this sentiment varied by sex and between victims and non-victims. Overall, older males reported slightly higher feelings of satisfaction with their safety compared with older females (93% versus 89%). In addition, older Canadians who had been victimized in the 12 months preceding the survey reported feeling less safe compared with those who had not. While 91% of older non-victims were satisfied with their personal safety from crime, this proportion fell to 83% among older Canadians who had been victimized.

In addition, feelings of safety also varied among victims and non-victims in specific situations. For instance, older victims were more likely than younger victims to state that they felt somewhat or very worried when home alone at night (25% versus 16%).

Majority of older Canadians feel strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods

In addition to feeling satisfied with their personal safety from crime, the majority of older Canadians also reported feeling a strong sense of belonging and trust in their communities. Overall, close to 8 in 10 (79%) Canadians aged 55 and over described their sense of belonging to their neighbourhood as strong, a proportion that was slightly higher than their younger counterparts (74%). Furthermore, older Canadians were slightly more likely than younger Canadians to state that their neighbourhood was one in which neighbours help each other (86% versus 83%).

Older Canadians were also more likely than their younger counterparts to state that that they could trust a variety of different people, including strangers, people in their neighbourhood, and colleagues or schoolmates. For example, three-quarters of older Canadians stated that they could trust people in their neighbourhood, compared 59% of Canadians under the age of 55 (Table 6).

In general, older men and women reported similar feelings of belonging and trust. For example, 79% of older men and 78% of older women described their sense of belonging to their communities as strong. In addition, 76% of men and 75% of women said they could trust people in their neighbourhood. The only difference in feelings of trust was related to strangers, with men being more likely than women to say they could trust people they didn't know (17% versus 12%).

While older Canadians reported a strong sense of belonging and feelings of trust, as with feelings of safety, these feelings varied among those who had been victimized and those who had not. Research has shown that experiencing victimization can weaken a victim's tie to their community by creating a sense of distrust of others within that community (Paras 2003; Ross et. al 2001). The findings of the 2009 GSS support this research. Older Canadians who had been violently victimized in the 12 months preceding the survey were less likely than older non-victims to say that their neighbourhood was a place where people help one another (78% to 87%). In addition, older victims were less likely than older non-victims to state that they could trust the people in their neighbourhood (67% to 76%).

Older victims of crime more likely than non-victims to use crime prevention techniques

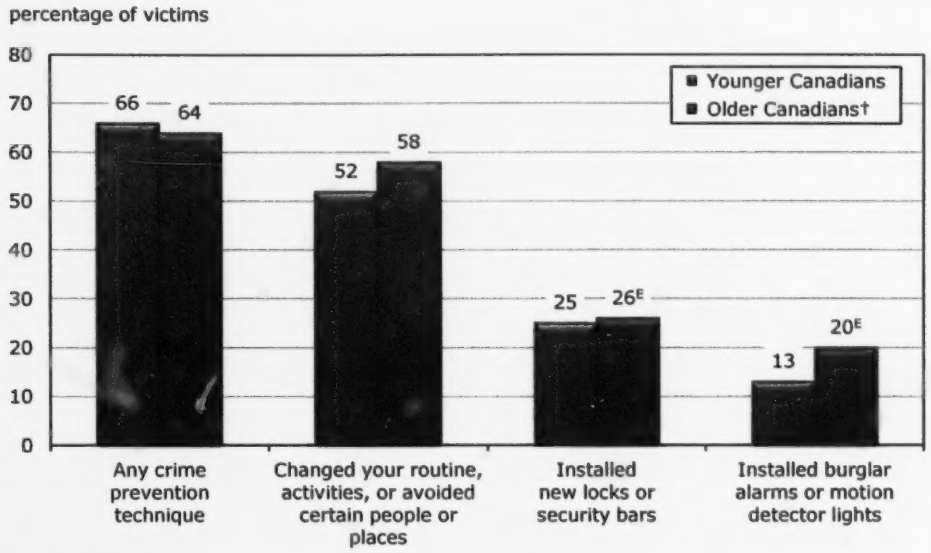
In recent years, many crime prevention programs have been developed to inform older Canadians on measures they can take to protect themselves and their property from crime. These measures range from walking in well-lit areas, to locking doors and windows, to not disclosing personal information to strangers (Royal Canadian Mounted Police 2011).

The 2009 GSS asked all Canadians whether they had used some form of crime prevention measure in the 12 months preceding the survey. In general, older Canadians were less likely than younger Canadians to say that they had used any form of crime prevention method in the previous 12 months (29% versus 43%).

Previous research has shown that the diminished feelings of safety produced by victimization often result in increased use of preventative measures (AuCoin and Beauchamp 2007). Overall, older Canadians who had been violently victimized were more likely than those who had not to indicate that they had used some form of crime prevention method in the 12 months preceding the survey (64% versus 29%).

The most common methods used by older victims included changing routines, activities or avoiding certain people or places (58%), installing new locks or security bars (26%[E]), and installing burglar alarms or motion detector lights (20%[E]). In general, older victims were no more likely to have used a crime prevention method compared with younger victims, and the techniques employed by both groups were similar (Chart 8).

Chart 8
Crime prevention methods used by younger and older victims in the previous 12 months, 2009



† reference category
E use with caution
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
Note: Younger Canadians refers to individuals ages 15 to 54. Older Canadians refers to individuals aged 55 years or over. Totals will not add to 100% due to multiple responses. Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

Summary

In 2009, older Canadians reported the lowest rates of violent victimization. Overall, the nature of violent incidents against older Canadians resembled that of younger Canadians, with both groups citing physical assault as the most common form of violence experienced. Among both groups, most incidents were committed by males acting alone, and many did not involve the use of a weapon and did not result in injury.

In addition to experiencing lower rates of violent victimization, household victimization was also lower among the older population. Theft of household property was the most common form of household victimization experienced by older and younger households alike.

Less than one-half of violent or household victimizations of older Canadians were brought to the attention of police; however, they were more likely to be reported to police than incidents involving younger Canadians. Overall, older Canadians were more likely than younger Canadians to state that they had been affected emotionally by violent incidents; however, both groups reported experiencing similar emotional consequences. In general, older Canadians reported high levels of satisfaction with their personal safety from crime, and a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhood; however, these feelings tended to be lower when the person reported having been victimized.

Methodology for the General Social Survey on Victimization

In 2009, Statistics Canada conducted the victimization cycle of the General Social Survey for the fifth time. Previous cycles were conducted in 1988, 1993, 1999 and 2004. The objectives of the survey are to provide estimates of Canadians' personal experiences of eight offence types, examine risk factors associated with victimization, examine reporting rates to police, measure the nature and extent of spousal violence, measure fear of crime, and examine public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system.

Sampling
The target population included all persons 15 years and older in the 10 Canadian provinces, excluding full-time residents of institutions. Households were selected by a telephone sampling method called Random Digit Dialing (RDD). Households without telephones or with only cellular phone service were excluded. Combined, these two groups represented approximately 9% of the target population (Residential Telephone Service Survey, (RTSS), December 2008). Thus, the coverage for 2009 was 91%.

Once a household was contacted, an individual 15 years or older was randomly selected to respond to the survey. The sample in 2009 was approximately 19,500 households, a smaller sample than in 2004 (24,000).

Data collection
Data collection took place from February to November 2009 inclusively. The sample was evenly distributed over the 10 months to represent seasonal variation in the information. A typical interview lasted 45 minutes. Prior to collection, all GSS questions went through qualitative and pilot testing.

Response rates
Of the 31,510 households that were selected for the 2009 GSS sample, 19,422 usable responses were obtained, representing a response rate of 61.6%. Types of non-response included those who refused to participate, could not be reached, or could not speak English or French. Respondents in the sample were weighted so that their responses represent the non-institutionalized Canadian population aged 15 years or over, in the 10 provinces. Each person who responded to the 2009 GSS represented roughly 1,400 people in the Canadian population aged 15 years and over.

Data limitations
As with any household survey, there are some data limitations. The results are based on a sample and are therefore subject to sampling error. Somewhat different results might have been obtained if the entire population had been surveyed. This *Juristat* uses the coefficient of variation (CV) as a measure of the sampling error. Any estimate that has a high CV (over 33.3%) has not been published because the estimate is too unreliable. In these cases, the symbol 'F' is used in place of an estimate in the figures and data tables. An estimate that has a CV between 16.6% and 33.3% should be used with caution and the symbol 'E' is referenced with the estimate. Where descriptive statistics and cross-tabular analysis were used, statistically significant differences were determined using 95% confidence intervals.

Using the 2009 GSS sample design and sample size, an estimate of a given proportion of the total population, expressed as a percentage is expected to be within 0.95 percentage points of the true proportion 19 times out of 20.

Note

[E] use with caution

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Note

[E] use with caution

Detailed data tables

Table 1
Self-reported victimization of older Canadians (55 years and over), 1999, 2004 and 2009

	Total violent victimization[1]		Total household victimization[2]	
Year	number (thousands)	rate[3]	number (thousands)	rate[4]
1999	109	17*	258	82*
2004	201	28	415	115
2009†	241	28	462	114

† reference category
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
1. Total violent victimization includes: sexual assault, robbery and physical assault.
2. Total household victimization includes: break and enter, motor vehicle theft or their parts, theft of household property and vandalism.
3. Rates are calculated per 1,000 population age 55 years and older.
4. Rates are calculated per 1,000 households composed solely of residents 55 years of age or older.
Note: Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999, 2004 and 2009.

Table 2
Self-reported violent victimization of younger and older Canadians by selected demographic characteristics, 2009

	Violent victimization of younger Canadians (15 to 54 years)		Violent victimization of older Canadians (55 years and over)†		Total violent victimization	
Demographic characteristics	number (thousands)	rate	number (thousands)	rate	number (thousands)	rate
Age						
55 to 64 years†	...	...	156	39	...	...
65 years and over	...	...	84[E]	19[E]*	...	...
Sex						
Male†	1,583	164	121	30	1,704	125
Female	1,443	151	119[E]	27[E]	1,563	112
Marital status						
Married or common-law†	1,149	100	165	28	1,314	76
Separated or divorced	252[E]	243[E]*	42[E]	50[E]*	293	158*
Single or widowed	1,625	241*	33[E]	20[E]	1,659	197*
Household income						
Less than $30,000†	309	205	49[E]	34[E]	359	121
$30,000 to $59,999	573	163	51[E]	24[E]	623	112
$60,000 or more	1,563	148*	115[E]	40[E]	1,678	125
Activity limitation						
Limited in activities†	1,094	241	140	34	1,234	143
No limitation	1,922	132*	100[E]	23[E]	2,023	107*

... not applicable
† reference category
[E] use with caution
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
Note: Rates are calculated per 1,000 population. Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

Table 3
Self-reported violent victimization of younger and older Canadians, by offender and offence characteristics, 2009

Offender and offence characteristics[1]	Violent victimization of younger Canadians (15 to 54 years)		Violent victimization of older Canadians (55 years and over)†		Total violent victimization	
	number (thousands)	percent	number (thousands)	percent	number (thousands)	percent
Number of offenders						
One	1,277	78	72	69	1,350	78
Two or more	356	22	F	F	388	22
Sex						
Male	1,122	88	60	86	1,182	88
Female	152	12	F	F	162	12
Relationship of offender to the victim[2]						
Family, friend, acquaintance, neighbour	782	48	46[E]	44[E]	828	48
Stranger	746	46	56[E]	54	802	46
Location of the incident						
Private residence	787	32*	85[E]	50	873	33
Commercial or institutional establishment	995	40*	42[E]	25[E]	1,037	39
Street or other public place	629	25	42[E]	25[E]	671	25
Presence of a weapon						
Yes	636	27	57[E]	35[E]	693	27
No	1,748	73	106	65	1,855	73
Did the incident cause injuries						
Yes	442	18	32[E]	19[E]	474	18
No	2,080	82	137	81	2,217	82

† reference category
[E] use with caution
F too unreliable to be published
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
1. Excludes all incidents of spousal sexual and physical assault.
2. The category of "other" relationship is included in the total but not shown. Therefore, totals may not add up to 100%.
Note: Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

Table 4
Self-reported household victimization of younger and older households by selected demographic characteristics, 2009

Household characteristics	Victimization of younger households (at least one member under age 55)		Victimization of older households (all members 55 years and over)		Total Canadian household victimization	
	number (thousands)	rate	number (thousands)	rate	number (thousands)	rate
Location of home						
Census metropolitan area†[1]	1,894	291	312	124	2,207	244
Non-census metropolitan area	828	289	150	99*	978	223
Household income						
Less than $20,000†	148	287	62	113	210	197
$20,000 to $39,999	290	287	80	83	370	187
$40,000 to $59,999	396	287	72	116	468	234
$60,000 to $99,999	709	306	90	151	798	275*
$100,000 and above	751	295	79	212*	830	284*
Household size						
1 person†	353	274	194	102	547	172
2 persons	736	278	263	125	999	210*
3 or more persons	1,633	301	F	F	1,638	300*
Type of home						
Single detached†	1,816	299	265	112	2,081	246
Semi-detached, row house, duplex	435	300	65[E]	143[E]	501	262
Apartment	415	259*	102	97	517	195*
Other	39[E]	234[E]	25[E]	188[E]	64	213
Ownership of home						
Owned†	2,015	288	363	122	2,379	238
Rented	692	301	95	93*	787	237
Length of residence						
Less than 5 years†	1,307	295	96	112	1,404	265
5 to less than 10 years	613	310	85	140	698	270
10 or more years	785	271	278	109	1,063	195*

† reference category
[E] use with caution
F too unreliable to be published
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
1. A census metropolitan area (CMA) consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a major urban core. A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the urban core. To be included in the CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area, as measured by commuting flows derived from census data.
Note: Rates are calculated per 1,000 households. Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

Table 5
Feelings of safety among younger and older Canadians, 2009

Feelings of safety	Younger Canadians (15 to 54 years)		Older Canadians (55 years and over)†		Total	
	number (thousands)	percent	number (thousands)	percent	number (thousands)	percent
How satisfied do you feel with your personal safety from crime						
Very or somewhat satisfied	17,925	93*	7,714	91	25,639	93
Very or somewhat dissatisfied	1,173	6	554	7	1,727	6
Walking alone at night in your area after dark, do you feel...						
Very or reasonably safe	14,832	90	4,570	90	19,401	90
Very or somewhat unsafe	1,569	10	492	10	2,062	10
When alone in your home in the evening or night, do you feel...						
Very or somewhat worried	3,271	17	1,330	16	4,602	17
Not at all worried	15,837	83	6,986	84	22,823	83

† reference category
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
Note: Responses of "Don't know" and "Not stated" are included in the table but not shown separately, therefore totals may not add up to 100%. Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

Table 6
Feelings of trust among younger and older Canadians, 2009

	Younger Canadians (15 to 54 years)		Older Canadians (55 years and over)†		Total	
Feelings of trust	**number (thousands)**	**percent**	**number (thousands)**	**percent**	**number (thousands)**	**percent**
The people in your family...						
Cannot be trusted	136	1	83	1	219	1
May or may not be trusted	443	2	146	2	589	2
Can be trusted	18,578	97	8,125	96	26,703	97
The people in your neighbourhood...						
Cannot be trusted	1,937	10*	372	4	2,309	8
May or may not be trusted	5,766	30*	1,446	17	7,212	26
Can be trusted	11,320	59*	6,380	75	17,700	64
The people who you work or go to school with...						
Cannot be trusted	1,052	6*	143	4	1,194	5
May or may not be trusted	3,735	20*	515	13	4,250	19
Can be trusted	13,370	73*	3,047	80	16,418	74
Strangers...						
Cannot be trusted	11,641	61*	3,762	44	15,403	56
May or may not be trusted	6,085	32*	3,040	36	9,125	33
Can be trusted	1,337	7*	1,248	15	2,585	9

† reference category
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
Note: Responses of "Don't know" and "Not stated" are included in the table but not shown separately, therefore totals may not add up to 100%. Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.